

# Economic Development

The purpose of the Economic Development Chapter is to strengthen the economic vitality of Eau Claire and guide public investment in economic development.

The *Comprehensive Plan* directs the City to work cooperatively with private industry, regional economic development partners, and state and federal agencies to promote investment in projects that will create quality employment opportunities for area residents and quality tax base for the community.

Business development and job creation are guided both to central locations, promoting redevelopment and infill growth, and to fringe locations where there is good highway access.

Well-located and serviced business and industrial parks are critical to the expansion of existing industries and key to attracting new companies. The City and its partner, Gateway Development Corporation, should continue to support investment in business and industrial parks. The City is directed to continue to aid redevelopment of commercial and industrial districts. The Downtown is the primary candidate for ongoing revitalization because of its importance as a center of office space, cultural resources, medical services, entertainment, and civic life.

## Key Issues

1. **Dynamic Global Economy:** What should the City do to address the changing economic conditions and opportunities in a global economy and continue to foster local economic investment and growth?
2. **Redevelopment Sites:** What should the City do to encourage business development and expansion in areas already served with streets and utilities?
3. **Additional Business and Industrial Sites:** What should the City do to address the community need for a sufficient inventory of serviced industrial and business locations with a competitive mix of sites with regard to location, size, topography, services, and covenants?
4. **Tax Base Density of Future Business Park Developments:** What should the City do to increase the tax base density of business and industrial parks?
5. **Downtown:** What should the City do to encourage expanded revitalization and reinvestment in the Downtown?

6. **Limited Mixed-use in Industrial Parks:** What should the City do to encourage limited mixed-use development in designated parts of business and industrial park developments?
7. **Conflicts with Adjacent Uses:** What should the City do to reduce land use incompatibilities between business/industrial parks, and residential development?
8. **Industry Concentrations and Target Industries:** What should the City do to target community resources to address the different challenges and opportunities facing declining industries, emerging industries and growth industries?
9. **Incentives:** What should the City do to ensure that its economic development incentive programs keep pace with changing economic conditions and opportunities and community priorities?
10. **Transportation and Telecommunications Infrastructure:** What should the City do to ensure sufficient investment in transportation infrastructure and telecommunications technology to enhance the City's economic competitiveness?
11. **Workforce:** What should the City do to attract and retain a well-educated and trained workforce, especially in idea and innovation-based occupations?
12. **Organization:** What should the City do to ensure that the structure and working relationships among community and regional economic development organizations continues to provide the most cost-effective approach to attracting sustained economic growth?

## Goal and Objectives

**Goal:** Seek to maintain a diverse economic base, high-quality workforce, and key quality of life assets necessary for attracting business investment and creating a sustainable tax base.

**Objective 1 – Dynamic Global Economy:** Periodically review and update economic development strategies, policies, investments and programs to respond to changing economic conditions and opportunities.

**Objective 2 – Industry Concentrations and Target Industries:** Identify issues and opportunities facing industry groups key to the economic health of the area, and take action to support them in retaining or creating employment and tax base in the City of Eau Claire.

**Objective 3 – Business and Industrial Sites:** Maintain a balanced and competitive inventory of business and industrial sites.

**Objective 4 – Tax Base Density:** Use land and related infrastructure efficiently to achieve greater commercial/industrial tax base density in business and industrial parks.

**Objective 5 – Sustainable Development:** Foster development that balances the benefits and burdens of economic growth by seeking to meet current community economic needs without reducing the capacity to meet the needs in the future.

**Objective 6 – Redevelopment:** Support redevelopment of contaminated, blighted, and underused properties with strong potential for reuse as business and industrial development sites.

**Objective 7 – Revitalization Efforts:** Foster economic revitalization of Downtown, the riverfront and other commercial areas by encouraging diverse economic activity, including public and private offices, retail, services, medical, hospitality businesses, high-density housing, and civic, cultural, and entertainment uses.

**Objective 8 – Campus Planning:** Foster coordination among the long-term development plans for major institutions in the vicinity of the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire and Sacred Heart Hospital and in the vicinity of the Luther-Midelfort (Mayo) medical campus.

**Objective 9 – Workforce:** Foster the competitive workforce needed for a high technology economy by working with community organizations and institutions to update existing workforce skills and to invest in the outdoor, recreational, lifestyle, entertainment, and neighborhood amenities.

**Objective 10 – Transportation and Telecommunications Infrastructure:** Support and facilitate strong telecommunications and transportation infrastructure to all local business, industrial, and office centers of economic activity, as well as to regional economic/transportation hubs such as Minneapolis, Chicago, Milwaukee, and Duluth/Superior.

**Objective 11 – Organization and Coordination:** Work with public and private economic development partners to efficiently and effectively address economic development issues and opportunities and minimize duplication of effort.

**Objective 12 – Tourism:** Support regional strategies to attract visitors to the area in ways that balance the economic benefits from tourism with the economic costs of expanded traffic and use of public facilities and services.

## **Economic Development Policies**

### **Objective 1 – Dynamic Global Economy**

**Periodically review and update economic development strategies, policies, investments, and programs to respond to changing economic conditions and opportunities.**

**Policies:**

1. **Development Areas:** Monitor local and regional development trends and absorption rates; adjust development strategies, policies, and investments to maintain a diverse and competitive inventory of development sites and buildings.
2. **Incentive Programs:** Monitor changing economic conditions and regional trends; review and update economic development finance, incentive, and technical assistance tools. Target incentives to businesses that provide higher wage jobs with benefits.
3. **Organization:** Periodically review how economic development programs are organized and delivered; adjust to reflect changes in economic conditions or community priorities; identify opportunities to deliver services more effectively and efficiently.

**Objective 2 – Industry Concentrations and Target Industries**

**Identify issues and opportunities facing industry groups key to the economic health of the area, and take action to support them in retaining or creating employment and tax base in the City of Eau Claire.**

**Policies:**

1. **Existing Industry Concentrations:** Monitor trends, issues and opportunities involving key industries in Eau Claire (food processing; technology, health care, education, finance and insurance, business and professional services, back office, plastics and rubber, metal manufacturing; printing and mailing). Identify cost-effective investments the public sector can make to support the competitiveness of existing industry groups (i.e., training programs, air service).
2. **Target Industries:** Work with the Eau Claire Area Economic Development Corporation (ECAEDC) to attract industries that can be competitive in the Eau Claire area and will strengthen the economy by providing good wages and benefits. Industry targets in 2005 should be medical device manufacturing and call centers. The list of targeted industry types should be reviewed and updated annually.

**Objective 3 – Business and Industrial Sites**

**Maintain a balanced and competitive inventory of business and industrial sites.**

**Policies:**

1. **Diverse and Competitive Inventory:** Continue to expand Gateway Business Park and other sites as needed to maintain a competitive inventory of serviced industrial

land, with a diversity of lot sizes to meet the needs of varied users. Maintain an 8-10 year inventory of fully serviced sites and zone a 30-year inventory for future business park development.

Provide excellent infrastructure and telecommunications capacity for all sites and appropriate access for trucks and employees. Zoning, transportation access, berms, and other buffers should be used to minimize potential for conflict with adjacent users.

2. **Limited Mixed Use:** Allow for limited mixed use in specific sections of the business park for service businesses valued by business park tenants (for example, childcare, fitness, banking, lodging, or meeting facilities). Develop land sale and incentive policies appropriate for such users.
3. **Local Commercial, Construction and Distribution Uses:** Encourage the development of business parks suitable for smaller, industrial service, construction, or distribution operations. If such sites are publicly developed or redeveloped, establish land sale or incentive policies. Redevelopment sites that provide appropriate locations and transportation access should be given priority consideration.
4. **Annexation:** Respond favorably to annexation petitions for additional business and industrial areas with good transportation and infrastructure access.
5. **Existing Industrial Areas:** Maintain existing industrial areas and enhance as appropriate, with special attention to changing technology and market conditions.
6. **Rail Service:** Pursue development of sites with potential for rail service. Use lease agreements rather than land sale whenever possible to maintain control of limited rail access and sewer, water, and other utilities, and to ensure flexibility to accommodate active users and future businesses.

#### **Objective 4 – Tax Base Density**

**Use land and related infrastructure efficiently to achieve greater commercial/industrial tax base density in business and industrial parks.**

##### **Policies:**

1. **Development Standards:** Work with Gateway Development Corporation and other business park developers to establish design and development standards that create a quality image for business and industrial sites and foster strong tax base density, while remaining competitive.
2. **Land Sale:** Work with Gateway Development Corporation to review land sale guidelines. Identify approaches that permit adequate space for a business to expand on site, but include provisions to enable Gateway to retain or regain ownership if such expansion does not occur within a defined time period.

3. **Financial Incentive Guidelines:** Review financial incentive guidelines to identify and implement policies that will enable the City to achieve employment and tax base density goals.

## **Objective 5 – Sustainable Development**

**Foster development that balances the benefits and burdens of economic growth by seeking to meet current community economic needs without reducing the capacity to meet the needs of the future.**

### **Policies:**

1. **Conserve Land and Natural Resources:** Use land wisely to reduce the risks of adversely affecting natural resources. The City should take a judicious approach when converting or approving the conversion of land to urban uses, and should seek to maintain the integrity of natural systems in urban settings.
2. **Leverage Previous Infrastructure Investments:** Build on or recycle existing urban structures and systems by leveraging previous investments to optimize location efficiencies. The City should seek to enhance and restore place-making historic and architectural qualities and integrate new with existing developments.
3. **Connectivity:** Seek to increase the access to economic and social opportunities by all segments of the community. The City should recognize the increasing diversity of needs within the community and stimulate interaction within the community by ensuring connections to existing communities and neighborhoods. The City should seek to connect new developments and on-site systems to surrounding developments and sites.
4. **Infrastructure Systems:** Integrate new development with transportation and other infrastructure systems by expanding travel options and access to them. The City should seek to address needs for expanding public facility capacities as development occurs and should place priority on those public facility investments that promote compact forms of development.
5. **Preservation of Natural Systems:** Take advantage of a development site's natural systems and assets by preserving and restoring to the extent possible natural systems as an essential component of development. In considering approval of new development, the City should seek to maintain or restore native vegetation, landforms, and landscapes to enhance the associated development.
6. **Infrastructure Design:** Design infrastructure systems to optimize efficient use by reusing or connecting to existing systems when feasible. The City should minimize impermeable surfaces and site disturbance, and make adequate provision for walking, cycling, and transit, as well as for cars.
7. **Infill:** Recycle urban land through infill and redevelopment.

8. **Diverse Neighborhoods:** Encourage diverse and adaptable neighborhoods and business centers by providing for a mix of uses and a broad range of housing choices. To the extent possible, the City should allow for individual expression and change and support the evolution of a unique character or sense of place.
9. **Building Footprint:** Encourage new buildings to incorporate building and site designs that minimize the building footprint, retain trees and natural landforms, and minimize paving and the use of permeable materials.
10. **Building Design:** Promote the design of new buildings for resource efficiency by recycling materials and using local materials. Whenever possible, the City should seek to adapt and reuse existing buildings and maximize opportunities for using solar energy and water-conserving fixtures, appliances, and landscaping.

## **Objective 6 – Redevelopment**

**Support redevelopment of contaminated, blighted, and underused properties with strong potential for reuse as business and industrial development sites.**

### **Policies:**

1. **Redevelopment Authority (RDA):** Ensure that the RDA plans and carries out redevelopment projects and has the authority to enter into contracts; acquire property through purchase, lease, or eminent domain; borrow money and issue bonds; improve, lease, and sell property; apply for grants, loans, or contributions; and invest excess funds. The RDA develops an operating plan for each designated area and project, which requires a public hearing and City Council approval.
2. **Redevelopment Tools:** Address the cost differential between redeveloping obsolete, blighted, or contaminated sites, and preparing greenfield sites; evaluate using a variety of financing tools, including tax increment finance, state and federal programs, and local revolving loan funds.
3. **Master Planning for Redevelopment:** Facilitate redevelopment involving larger or more complex projects by preparing a master plan or issuing a Request for Proposal (RFP) for a master plan that addresses private development features, as well as public infrastructure and amenities.
4. **Eminent Domain:** Consider the use of eminent domain to meet redevelopment goals.
5. **East Airport Entrance between Chippewa Valley Industrial Park and U.S. 53/124:** Plan for long-term redevelopment of residential property along Melby between U.S. 53/124 and the Chippewa Valley Industrial Park due to truck traffic entering the industrial park and increased airport traffic. Acquire property or options from willing sellers and plan for a use appropriate to an airport and industrial park gateway.

6. **National Presto:** Pursue redevelopment of this 300-acre site, including the brownfield areas under remediation. The site is well located for commercial/industrial purposes and redevelopment should occur when the seller is willing and market conditions are favorable.

## **Objective 7 – Revitalization Efforts**

**Foster economic revitalization of Downtown, the riverfront and other commercial areas by encouraging diverse economic activity, including public and private offices, retail, services, medical, hospitality businesses, higher density housing, and civic, cultural, and entertainment uses.**

### **Policies:**

1. **Downtown Employers:** Work to retain and attract major employers, particularly offices, corporate headquarters and courts (federal, state, and local). These important “anchor tenants” bring in workers, as well as legal and professional services, to Downtown during the traditional work week.
2. **Entertainment, Civic, Recreational and Cultural Resources:** Work to retain and attract entertainment, civic, recreational, and cultural resources, such as the library, YMCA, theaters, parks and trails, and restaurants. These “anchor tenants” bring area residents to Downtown and the riverfront during the evening and weekend hours.
3. **Post Office:** Pursue construction of an updated postal facility in Downtown Eau Claire.
4. **Housing:** Seek to attract higher density housing in and around Downtown and along the riverfronts to make greater use of existing public infrastructure and to strengthen economic activity and market demand in the Downtown during the evening and weekend hours. The City’s review of residential development projects in and around Downtown should reflect strong consideration of the potential impacts of projects on the long-term stability and vitality of existing neighborhoods.
5. **Downtown Eau Claire, Incorporated (DECI):** Support DECI as the lead organization for issues related to Downtown Eau Claire and to serve as a liaison between City government and Downtown businesses. The City should continue to assist DECI in providing an organizational framework for Downtown business and property owners to develop a shared economic vision, and addressing design/appearance and marketing/promotion issues.
6. **Business Improvement Districts (BIDs):** Foster cooperation and reinvestment and improve the appearance of the City’s commercial districts through support for BIDs. The City will continue to encourage BIDs in commercial redevelopment areas.



7. **Downtown Loan Funds:** Continue to support revitalization of downtown properties through the Downtown Loan Pool, Downtown Facade Loan Program and the Code Compliance Loan Program.
8. **Riverfront Redevelopment:** Redevelop the older, underutilized industrial areas bordering the Chippewa and Eau Claire Rivers.
9. **Water Street:** Support continued revitalization of Water Street as a unique commercial destination and business center.
10. **Hastings Way (Business 53):** Facilitate a study of the joint rebuilding of Business Highway 53 to maintain its role in the beltway system, while providing options for safe pedestrian crossing, improving aesthetics and enhancing the potential for business investment.
11. **Oakwood Mall Area:** Continue to work with private developers to ensure appropriate public infrastructure, traffic flow and access to Oakwood Mall and surrounding commercial development.

## **Objective 8 – Campus Planning**

**Foster coordination among the long-term development plans for major institutions in the vicinity of the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire and Sacred Heart Hospital and in the vicinity of the Luther-Midelfort (Mayo) medical campus.**

### **Policies:**

1. **Clairemont Avenue Area Plan:** Support the creation of an overall coordinated long-term development plan for the area north of Clairemont Avenue encompassing the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire, Chippewa Valley Technical College, Marshfield Clinic, Sacred Heart Hospital, state office buildings, and adjacent medical and financial offices. The area plan should address a broad range of issues and opportunities, including, traffic and access management, parking demand and opportunities for shared parking, transit service and amenities, pedestrian and bicycle movement, green space and amenities, and services such as childcare and other businesses.
2. **Downtown Medical Center District Plan:** Encourage creation of an overall coordinated development plan that links the future expansion and use of the City Parks and Recreation building, West Riverside office building, and L.E. Phillips Senior Center to the long-term master plan for the Luther-Midelfort (Mayo) Medical Center campus. The plan should address traffic and access, parking, transit needs and other issues. This plan should encourage the development of a variety of well-designed housing options for employees in the district.

## **Objective 9 – Workforce**

**Foster the competitive workforce needed for a high technology economy by working with community organizations and institutions to update existing workforce skills and to invest in the outdoor, recreational, lifestyle, entertainment and neighborhood amenities.**

### **Policies:**

1. **Retain Students:** Support linkages between the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire and Chippewa Valley Technical College and area employers that feature quality employment opportunities to retain students and program graduates. Welcome and integrate students and faculty into the community and area businesses.
2. **Link Employers and Workforce Development Resources:** Serve as a link between specific employers or industry groups and workforce development resources to train or retrain workers.
3. **Quality of Life:** Support investments in recreational, entertainment, cultural amenities, quality neighborhoods and community features important to attracting and retaining the diverse, skilled workforce needed to compete in the global economy.

## **Objective 10 – Transportation and Telecommunications Infrastructure**

**Support and facilitate strong telecommunications and transportation infrastructure to all local business, industrial and office centers of economic activity, as well as to regional economic/transportation hubs such as Minneapolis, Chicago, Milwaukee and Duluth/Superior.**

### **Policies:**

1. **Telecommunications Lines, Antennae, and Wireless Devices:** Ensure that easements are made available to support state-of-the-art telecommunications, especially to centers of economic activity.
2. **High Speed Rail:** Support routing of high-speed rail service linking Chicago, Milwaukee, Madison and Minneapolis through Eau Claire and the Chippewa Valley.
3. **Chippewa Valley Regional Airport:** Support enhancements of the airport and air service, consistent with the City's *Comprehensive Plan* that will provide businesses and residents with competitive air cargo and passenger service options to/from the Eau Claire area.

## Objective 11 – Organization and Coordination

**Work with public and private economic development partners to efficiently and effectively address economic development issues and opportunities and minimize duplication of effort.**

### **Policies:**

1. **Lead Organization:** Provide leadership and coordination through the City Economic Development Division for all economic development activities in the Eau Claire city limits, including, but not limited to, downtown, business redevelopment areas, industrial and technological development, and commercial and retail development. To streamline and expedite necessary approval processes, City staff will provide direct contact and coordination with all businesses seeking City funds or wanting to purchase lands owned by or in part by the City.
2. **Coordination and Cooperation:** Clearly delineate roles and responsibilities for various economic development functions (i.e., downtown revitalization, industrial park development, business retention, marketing, administration of grants/loans, creating and maintaining websites) to create focused, efficient and effective delivery of economic development services in the community.

The City will partner with other resources to enhance the quality of service to the business prospect, save money, share risk, draw on the expertise of qualified organizations, or enhance the image and perception of the Eau Claire area.

3. **Accountability:** Develop performance measures for the various economic development programs, using criteria such as private investment leveraged, number of jobs, increase in tax base, acres of brownfield cleaned up, and number of facades upgraded.

The performance measures will be used to quantify the accomplishments and impact of the City's Economic Development Division and economic development partners (ECAEDC, DECI, Housing Authority, RDA, Gateway Development Corporation, Chippewa Valley Incubation Center, Momentum Chippewa Valley, etc.).

4. **Role of the Eau Claire Area Economic Development Corporation (ECAEDC):** Pursue an ongoing collaborative relationship with the ECAEDC that assists the ECAEDC in fulfilling the following key roles in exchange for the City's direct financial support:
  - **Marketing:** Develop appropriate community profiles, brochures, website and other marketing materials. Develop and implement a proactive recruitment process with active outreach to geographic targets (i.e., Twin Cities and Chicago) and sector targets (i.e., medical device and call centers). Subsequent follow-up on leads developed regarding existing or potential businesses or business properties within the City of Eau Claire should be provided by City staff.

- Private Sector Leadership: Engage the private sector to suggest policies, support City efforts and secure funding to match the public sector expenditures.
  - Regional Development: Determine the best way to coordinate and implement regional economic development.
5. **Regional Cooperation:** Encourage the practice of effective regional cooperation in economic development. The City will take a leadership role in establishing regular review processes and convening local government partners to clarify expectations, improve efficiency and effectiveness, and set accountability measures.
  6. **Marketing:** Market the City of Eau Claire economic development amenities through the ECAEDC. Pursuant to continued funding by the City of Eau Claire, the ECAEDC will create and print marketing materials for City economic development amenities and format them for a website. All materials will have the contact information of City staff on the marketing piece. Prospects and leads will be directed to City staff for response.

The City staff may do some niche marketing that is not done by another organization (e.g., direct mail on a specific building or mailing to University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire alumni). The City's Economic Development website will also have general economic development information, community statistics, and information on financial resources, protective covenants for the business parks and other information.
  7. **Business Recruitment:** Take the lead in meeting directly with companies interested in locating in the City of Eau Claire. City staff will be responsible for working with prospects in the City and proposing sites. The City may partner with economic development organizations, such as ECAEDC or Forward Wisconsin to proactively market the community.
  8. **Retention and Expansion of Local Industry:** Place a priority on the retention and expansion of existing industries and major employers. Conduct visits, provide program assistance and thank them for employing local citizens. The Eau Claire Area Economic Development Corporation may be involved in making business calls and providing referrals to the City from those calls.
  9. **Community Information:** Serve as the clearinghouse for information on the local economy, gathering and tracking development statistics, demographics, local trends, employment statistics, traffic counts and data meaningful to developers and site locators.
  10. **Infrastructure:** Provide water, sewer, and storm utilities to industrial parks. City staff will also provide analysis and recommendations on fiber optics and other information technology needed by the community, and work with Xcel Energy regarding the electric and gas utilities.
  11. **Communication:** Communicate regularly with key stakeholders and the general public regarding economic development issues, opportunities, goals, progress, and impact.

12. **Customer Service:** Handle the City's development and regulatory functions in a professional manner, with a focus on customer service while ensuring compliance of the City's development standards and regulations.
13. **Regulatory Environment:** Periodically examine the City's policies and regulations to identify any which may put the community at a competitive disadvantage.

## **Objective 12 – Tourism**

**Support regional strategies to attract visitors to the area in ways that balance the economic benefits from tourism with the economic costs of expanded traffic and use of public facilities and services.**

### **Policies:**

1. **Lead Organization:** Continue to support the Chippewa Valley Convention and Visitors Bureau as the lead marketing organization for recruiting visitors to Eau Claire and the larger multi-county Chippewa Valley Region.
2. **Wayfinding System:** Design and implement a uniform destination wayfinding system to guide visitors' movements throughout the metropolitan area.
3. **Convention Center:** Support community efforts in assessing the need, potential locations and project feasibility for a major public assembly facility in the Eau Claire-Chippewa Falls metropolitan area to attract conventions and events.
4. **Culturally Diverse Downtown:** Support the development of Downtown as an eclectic urban center, attractive to the eye, embracing tolerance and openness, and offering a broad mix of experiences, culture, and artistic expression.
5. **Amateur Sports Destination:** Support expansion of community recreational facilities and events necessary to successfully market Eau Claire as a premier amateur sports destination in the Midwest.
6. **Marketing Regional Destinations:** Continue to design and implement visitor attraction marketing strategies that emphasize the broader Chippewa Valley multi-county area.